



Date Received 1/29/2020

## Historic District/Landmark Nomination

City of Baton Rouge / Parish of East Baton Rouge  
Office of the Planning Commission, 1100 Laurel Street, Suite 104  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

### Staff Use Only

Fee(s): 250.00

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

MPN Project Number: 52006

Application Taken by: BAT

Meeting Date: March 11, 2020

**Please Print or Type** (all entities listed below will be copied on all comments)

1. Applicant Name and Title: Preserve Louisiana, Fairleigh Jackson, Executive Director  
Email Address: fairleigh@preserve-louisiana.org Daytime Phone Number: 504.715.0303  
Address: 502 North Boulevard City: Baton Rouge State: LA ZIP: 70802
2. Developer (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name of Property Owner: Hedi M. Butler, et al. Daytime Telephone: 770.680.0950  
Email Address: wordsalon@gmail.com  
Address: 963 Terrace Avenue City: Baton Rouge State: LA ZIP: 70802
4. Subject Property Information:  
CPPC Lot ID#(s): #840353264  
Lot #(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Block/Square: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subdivision or Tract Name: Swart Subdivision, Old South Baton Rouge  
(If property is not subdivided, attach a complete legal description from the East Baton Rouge Parish Tax Assessor and a survey map indicating bearings and dimensions.)  
Nearest Intersection: Terrace Avenue and Thomas H. Delpit Drive
5. Property Street Address: 963 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802
6. Historic Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Names: The Dr. Leo S. Butler and Estelle Devall Butler Family Home
6. Ownership of Property:  
☒ Private    ☐ Public-Local    ☐ Public-State    ☐ Public-Federal
7. Category of Property:  
☐ District    ☒ Building    ☐ Structure    ☐ Site    ☐ Object

8. Number of Resources within the Property:

	National Register Listed/Eligible	Contributing Element	Modest Contributing Element	Non-Contributing Element
Buildings		1		
Structures				
Sites				
Objects				
Total				

9. Original Owner: Dr. Leo s. Butler, Estelle Devall Butler

Significant Later Owner(s): Dr. Leo S. Butler, Estelle Devall Butler

10. Date(s) of construction: 1927-1928

Date(s) of alterations/additions: None

11. Historic Use: Private home and physician's office

Present Use: Private Home

12. Physical Description:

Describe the historic and current condition of the property/district on one or more continuation sheets. Include style(s) of architecture and relationship to surrounding fabric. Elaborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments, site details, and major alterations.

The house is a 1920's unaltered bungalow style with original wood siding,

shutters, and windows; a substantial front porch; and gable on hip roof. Please attachment A.

13. Criteria for Designation:

Landmark (Check all that apply)

☐ It is an outstanding example of a building, structure, object, or work of art representative of its era.

☐ It is one of the few remaining examples of past architectural styles.

☐ Plans, Elevations, & Sections

☒ It is a place, building, site, object, work of art or structure associated with an event or a person of historic cultural significance to Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, or the region.

District (Check all that apply)

☐ It has special character or special cultural value, historic/aesthetic values or interest.

☐ It represents one or more periods of styles of architecture typical in one or more eras in the history of the city-parish, state, or region.

☐ It constitutes a visibly perceptible section of the municipality or city-parish.

14. Statement of Significance:

Describe the significance of the property/district on one or more continuation sheets. Describe the history of the property/district on one or more continuation sheets. Provide details about the circumstances of construction and specific historical associations, including why this property/district has direct association with an important individual, group, event, or historic trend. Be sure to explain precisely how the property/district meets the above criteria for designation.

Please see attachment B.

15. Bibliography (Use additional sheet if necessary):

Attachments:

- ☐ District or Site Map      ☐ Site Plan      ☒ Photographs (historic and current)  
☐ Other      ☐ Historic Building Inventory (districts only)

16. Owner Consent for Landmark Designation:

I/We, the undersigned, acting as owner(s) of the property described in this application for landmark designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as a Local Historic Landmark.

Signature of Property Owner      Type of Print Property Owner Name      Date

If the owner does not consent to designation, describe the reasons for recommending designation:

The owner consents but has given Preserve Louisiana the authority to submit the application on their behalf, please see attachment C.

17. Acknowledgement:

In filing this application, I understand that it becomes a part of the public record of the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge and hereby certify that all information contained herein as accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the application fee is nonrefundable. (Applications must be received by 10:00a.m. on the scheduled Application Deadline.)

  
Signature of Applicant

Fairleigh Jackson, Preserve Louisiana  
Type or Print Name of Applicant

29 Jan 2020  
Date

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Building Inventory, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Photograph:

Building Address: 963 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70802

Map/Parcel:

Listed on National Register: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Located in National Register Historic District: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Date:

Photo/Map Source:

Date of Survey: Surveyor:

Historic Information:

Attachment A



The Dr. Leo S.  
Butler and Estelle Devall Butler Family Home  
963 Terrace Avenue  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802









The Dr. Leo S. Butler and Estelle Devall Butler Family Home  
Prepared by Hedi Butler  
Edited by Fairleigh Jackson

The Dr. Leo S. Butler Family Home, built in 1927 and located at 963 Terrace Avenue in Old South Baton Rouge, is a repository of black community history that far transcends the family's personal narrative to one of a community pillar spanning decades. The site is a true local landmark for Baton Rouge, and beyond.

Like so many of his era, Leo Stanley Butler's story represents a triumph of will over circumstances. Born in 1899 in neighboring Burtville, Louisiana, he was the youngest of 13 children in an impoverished family headed by a sharecropper who died on the same day of his birth. He always credited his mother with inspiring all of her children to learn and excel, despite an often hostile environment for people of color.

Young Leo proved to be an excellent student whose academic prowess and determination to succeed were recognized by the Baptist missionaries who founded Blundon Orphanage. They mentored him and he became the first male graduate of Baton Rouge Colored High School, later McKinley High School.

His early interest in medicine – and recognition of the inequities in available – led to what seemed an impossible dream of attending medical school at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Through sheer grit and determination, he arrived at Howard in 1918, was drafted for service in World War I, and spared by the War's end in November of that year.

With limited resources and an ailing mother whom he adored, Leo Butler pursued his studies with great determination and purpose. He ultimately succeeded by completing accelerated curricula of undergraduate and graduate study while working several jobs. Butler graduated at the top of his class in both. After completing a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology, he returned home to Baton Rouge to set up his medical practice.

In 1926, his mother succumbed to a chronic illness, and his dedication and determination turned to providing accessible medical care for those in need. With the assistance of his brother

George A. Butler, a pharmacist, he acquired property in what was called the Swart subdivision on then Reddy Street, and the house was built shortly thereafter to serve not only as a home, but the office for Dr. Butler's practice.

The design for the spacious and attractive property retained a home-like look, with Southern traditional posts and a large front porch. But it also included a separate side entrance for the office and a layout that would work efficiently to house a waiting room and treatment area, while preserving the privacy of the occupants.

Patients flocked to see the young physician whose services they considered a God-send. His devoted wife, Estelle Devall Butler, was a strategic help-mate in facilitating the dual-use home-office arrangement. As the practice grew, Dr. Butler's training in OB-GYN contributed to his delivering of thousands of babies, despite his own lack of access to hospital privileges until the mid-60s. This was a breakthrough in which he played a pivotal role as the "Dean of Black Physicians."

By many contemporaneous accounts, Dr. Butler's home became much more than a place where people could obtain the medical care previously unavailable to many of them, often paying with produce or whatever they could give. (Dr. Butler never considered the inability to pay a restriction for service.) In a very real sense, his home/office in a predominantly residential neighborhood became a very visible and enduring symbol of what could be achieved by one of their own from such a humble background.

Dr. Butler's influence grew beyond his residence/office when in 1941, George and Leo Butler built and opened the Butler Building on then East Boulevard, an imposing block-long structure that housed a large, modern medical office for Dr. Butler, the Ideal Drug Store for George Butler's pharmacy practice, as well as other small black-owned businesses. (While the Butler Building was demolished several years ago, the Dr. Leo S. Butler Community Center now stands as a testament to the esteem in which this physician and humanitarian is still held.)

While the home on re-named Terrace Street no longer housed the office, it continued to play an important role in the larger community. When the street was paved in the 1950s, the large beautiful oak trees, with their trunks painted white, were cut down by the city to accommodate the widening of Terrace.

But while Mrs. Butler lamented the loss of her beloved trees, she was well occupied with managing a busy household and caring for her family of four girls: Valeria Jean, Estelle Elayne, Shirley Adeen, and Hedi Marie – all of whom were delivered at the house on Terrace by Dr. Butler's longtime friend and colleague, Dr. H. Horne Huggins. She was also thrust into the role

of hosting hundreds of people who were welcomed at her home because of the Jim Crow Era social restrictions of the times.

Throughout the '40s through the late '50s and beyond, the impact of segregation throughout the Deep South led to the lack of public facilities, including hotels, serving people of color. Baton Rouge was no exception. So it was not unusual for the Butler home to be used to house and entertain a host of visiting dignitaries.

This group included political figures and entertainers, among others. Young piano prodigy, Philippa Schuyler, the daughter of noted publisher George Schuyler, even held an impromptu concert at the home and left signed sheet music for one of her compositions. Local civic, political and social organizations were also hosted at the Butler home, from civil rights and other community action groups to members of sororities and fraternities.

One of the family traditions in which the home took on another dimension of service was that on each major holiday, guests who had no local ties would be invited to eat and celebrate. Frequently, these guests were faculty and students from Southern University, including those from foreign countries.

After the passing of Estelle Devall Butler in 1959 and Dr. Butler's remarriage and relocation in 1973, his eldest daughter, V. Jean Butler agreed to move into the family home with an overarching commitment to preserving its historic legacy and significance in the Old South Baton Rouge community.

In the ensuing decades of her occupancy, Jean Butler has done an exemplary job in restoring the home's elegance, while maintaining the functionality and structural integrity of a house that is at least 90 years old.

The Dr. Leo S. Butler Community Center, 950 East Washington Street, serves as a legacy in fulfilling Dr. Butler's commitment to the community and is a testament to the impact Dr. Butler has and continues to have. The center offers many workshops to adults, senior citizens and children in an effort to uplift and inform them of services that can enhance their lives in a positive way.

The home and former office of Dr. Butler tell a far more rich cultural story, and is more than a family treasure; it is an invaluable part of the larger history of Old South Baton Rouge and its legacy and contributions should be shared with generations to come as a Local Landmark. Jean and her sister Hedi (the first African American woman to appear on Jeopardy) continue to welcome family (including grand-daughter actress Lynn Whitfield and her daughter musician Grace Gibson) and community to gather, make memories, and participate in a rich cultural history of Old South Baton Rouge.

## Attachment C



Wed 1/29/2020 11:32 AM

hedibutler@aol.com

Authorization for Leo S. Butler Home Representation

To Fairleigh Jackson

Cc whitend2153@gmail.com; kbst34@aol.com; shawnemery@gmail.com; d2pierce@aol.com; sharonbzimmerman@aol.com

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

As one of the four heirs and owners of The Dr. Leo S. Butler and Estelle Devall Butler Family Home, I hereby authorize Fairleigh Jackson of Preserve Louisiana to submit any requisite documentation on our behalf in obtaining the historic designation for the property. She has worked closely with us on this project and enjoys our complete trust, confidence, and gratitude for her efforts toward this end.

Sincerely,

Hedi M. Butler  
Valeria Jean Butler  
Elayne Butler Bryant (posthumous in accord with her heirs)  
Shirley Butler Pierce